



DECEMBER 2009 ISSUE

Columns ⊕ ⊕ ⊕

QUÉ PASA IN LA

By Rudy Mangual

This Holiday Season in Los Angeles kicks off with a dance concert by Cuban superstar **Albita** at The Sportsmen's Lodge (Empire Ballroom) in Studio City on December, 4th.



The American Legion's Borinquen Post 508 (a non-profit organization) presents its **9th Annual Salsa con Santa** on Saturday, December 5th. Music will be provided by Angel Lebrón & Sabor Latino plus DJ Papo "El Salsero" Rodríguez. The event will be held at the American Legion Post 790 located at 330 N. Azusa in the city of West Covina. An authentic Puerto Rican dinner is included with admission. For more information, call 714-357-3864 or 626-919-5553.

Conjunto Afro-Son takes the stage of The Zanzibar in Santa Monica on Monday, December 7th. For more information, visit www.zumbao.com or call 310-393-8200.



Mama Juana's nightclub/restaurant in Studio City will host a "Benefit For Víctor **"Negrito" Pantoja**" on Tuesday, December 8th. This fundraising event is to help Víctor Pantoja, who is fighting a fierce battle with cancer. The special event will feature the salsa sounds of Octavio Figueroa y La Combinación and Conjunto Oye, plus many guest musicians, including Perico Hernández. Doors open from 6 p.m. and the party will go on until late.

Highlighting this year's season is the **7th Annual Dímelo! Records Holiday Party** on Thursday, December 10th, at the landmark Mayan Theater in downtown Los Angeles. Headlining the event will be five complete orchestras with over 50 musicians, live on stage, all of whom perform and record under the Dímelo! Records label – a Los Angeles-based recording and management label presided by Nissim Bali. The bands include Orquesta Tabaco y Ron, Chino Espinoza & Los Dueños del Son, Johnny Polanco y su

Conjunto Amistad, the Grammy-nominated Charanga Cubana, and the septet Lucky 7. Also at hand will be Super DJ Robby and DJ Javier Suazo, plus Dímelo's Sexy Santas. Dímelo! Records will also give a free compilation CD to all paid-entrance attendants. For reservations and more information, visit www.dimelorecords.com.

Albert Torres Productions continues its live "Salsa Fridays at the Sportsmen's Lodge" in Studio City with a special dance concert featuring local favorite **Poncho Sánchez and his Latin Jazz Band** on Friday, December 11th. Also performing and welcoming the new year at the Sportsmen's Lodge will be **Johnny Polanco y su Conjunto Amistad** on January 1st, 2010, and **Chino Espinoza & Los Dueños del Son** on January 15th.

Del Mar Productions will be presenting **Navidad Cubana**, hosted by Alex Ortega ("Cuban Alex") on Saturday, December 12, at the Portofino Restaurant in Downey. Music will be provided by Noel Montano (ex-singer of Grupo Climax), DJ Sabroso, DJ Makú and DJ Ricubana, plus entertainment by comedians Rubén Rabasa and Chico y Sus Muñecos. For tickets and reservations, call 562-577-2091. The popular salsa band **Costazul** (led by the Crespo Brothers) will be finishing off the year at the Sabor Restaurant in Glendale, on Thursday, December 31st, 2009. For reservations and more information, visit www.saborglendale.com or call 818-247-6256.

Orquesta Charangoa, led by flutist Fay Roberts, will be performing at The Granada Nightclub in the city of Ahambra, on Friday, January 1st, 2010. Continue supporting your local music and art



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venues. Peace.



A BITE FROM THE APPLE

By Vicki Solá



This past October 31st, I had the opportunity to check out Edwin and Angel "Mambo" Lebrón, Jr., and their Mambo Orchestra of New York – the Lebrón dynasty's "next generation"-at the West Gate Lounge. Their dynamic performance rocked the house and included renditions of a hot new single, *S.A.L.S.A.*, and the classic number *Cocinando*, the latter of which featured a brilliant interplay between congas and timbales.

Bassist **Angel "Mambo" Lebrón, Jr.** (pictured) is the son of Angel Lebrón, and the nephew of Pablo, José, Carlos, and Frankie, who comprised the Lebrón Brothers, famous for the hit *Salsa y Control*.

At the age of five, the Brooklyn-born Lebrón began playing congas with his illustrious family at places like the St. George Hotel and the New York Casino, wowing everyone and earning the nickname "Mambo" because he would only play during his favorite parts of each number-the mambo section.

Also known as a musical director, producer, arranger, and songwriter, Angel started playing as bass guitarist in small rock bands, while participating in every school concert and theatrical event during his teenage years. He formed a freestyle group in 1987, signing with Fever Records, and garnered his first producing and writing credits for his debut single when he and his cousin, percussionist/songwriter Edwin Acevedo, organized the group Magic Touch, featuring Jackie Santana.

He also collaborated with Andy "Panda" on several projects, including Raianna Paige's *Open Up Your Heart* (Sleeping Bag Productions).

In 1991, Lebrón encountered a small group comprised of three cousins from Brooklyn, whom he dubbed Voyce. He was working with Carlos Berríos, when the hit *Within My Heart* took off, and it was charted on Billboard magazine's "Top 100," reaching number 48 and staying on the charts for more than fifteen weeks.

By 1996, inspired by his father and Rubén Rodríguez, Lebrón made the decision to immerse himself in the music he considered his first love – salsa – and tailor his electric bass style to suit it. He performed with Héctor Tricoché and Cano Estremera, and went on to tour with many high-profile artists, including Brenda K. Starr, Tito Nieves, José Alberto (El Canario), Michael Stuart, D'Mingo, and Frankie Negrón.

Lebrón became musical director for Negrón, his sister Corrine, George Lamond, and Son by Four. His resumé also lists performances with Ismael Rivera, Andy Montañez, Tito Gómez, Miosotis, Héctor Bonet, Conjunto Imagen, Luis Damón, Johnny Rivera, Nora (of Orquesta de la Luz fame), Velas, Charlie Cruz, and Son del Ayer, and recording credits with The Lebrón Brothers (*Salsa Lebrón* and *Lo Místico*), Corrine (*Todo Mujer*), Conjunto Imagen (*Entrando al Milenio*), plus René Leyva, D'Mingo, Miosotis, Rey Reyes, and Héctor Bonet.

He formed his 15-piece Mambo Orchestra of New York to play music that honors the best of the past and present, while performing his original compositions, as well as those penned by vocalist/musician/co-leader Edwin Lebrón. In addition, he has started his own label, Taino Records. "Our goal," states Angel Lebrón, "is to inspire those who have dreams, and those who wish to keep our music alive forever." He adds, "Do not give up on your dreams, because dreams do come true."

DJ Jeff's "Hot Pick of the Month": Moncho Rivera's *El Que No Sufre No Vive*.

Around town... The evening of December 5th, "El Trombonazo" heats up Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture, in the Bronx. The gala concert presents legendary trombonists Sam Burtis, William Cepeda, Johnny Colón, Lewis C. Kahn, Leopoldo Pineda, and Papo Vásquez, plus Gilberto Colón, Jr., & Ensalada de Pulpo, and Lucho Cueto & Black Sugar Sextet, featuring vocalist José Mangual, Jr. Further info is available at www.hostos.cuny.edu/culturearts.

Something new... On December 12th, the West Gate Lounge features Ray de la Paz y su Orquesta, plus a special new 2 A.M. late show, with Junior Vega & Ritmo Sabroso, treating patrons to salsa, mambo, chachachá and son montuno. The late session, which returns on February 13th, will be open to musicians who would like to come and jam. Orquesta Broadway, Frankie Morales & The Mambo of the Times Orchestra, and Grupo Latin Vibe are also on the West Gate's December roster, capped off by New Year's Eve with Jimmy Sabater's orchestra. Further info is available at www.WestGateLounge.com.

Finally, I'd like to convey my deepest appreciation and gratitude to all those instrumental in creating and making the October 28th tribute to my radio program (¡Qué Viva La Música!) such a resounding success, a truly unforgettable evening – one that will stay with me forever: Clara Colón, Jr., Roberto and Jorge Ayala (and the entire staff of La Fonda Boricua), Fred Goldstein, Bobby Allende & Ocho y Más, Gilberto Colón, Jr. & Ensalada de Pulpo (featuring special guest Ray Martínez), and Jesse Herrero's SonSublime. It was wonderful to see so many friends and loyal listeners, some of whom I met for the very first time that night.

Happy holidays, happy new year, y qué viva la música! ¡Hasta la próxima!



LATIN UPDATE

By Nelson Rodriguez

Robby Ameen photo ©2009 by Taji Ameen



It is hard to believe that another year is here and gone, but as of this writing there are dozens of acts preparing to release new material in 2010. Hopefully, these acts will use the simple strategy of servicing radio stations if they hope to have any chance of really making a dent in sales. In 2009, many recordings had equal opportunities of entering multiple Top 10 lists and receiving important airplay at non-commercial radio, but failed to do so.

It almost felt like there was a Latin jazz release coming out every week as the genre once again ruled, but salsa recordings worldwide were also plentiful, even though many never found their way to my office. Among those salsa and Latin jazz recordings that did make it to my office were Paul de Castro y su Orquesta Dengue, Aymée, Guashara, Janine Santana, Maña, La Excelencia, The Echo Park Project, Carlos Jiménez, Arturo O'Farrill, Foto Rodríguez, La Palabra, Choco Orta, Issac Delgado, Gilberto Santa Rosa, Oscar D'León, Bataola, Charlie Sierra y su Orquesta Paso Nivel, Mayté, La Surcusal SA, The Cuban Masters Ensemble, John Santos, Paoli Mejías, Truco & Zaperoko, Edwin Clemente, Kristina, Dave Santiago & Latin Affair, Perico Hernández, Kat Parra, Arnaldo y La Cosmopolita, Conjunto Imagen, Wayne Wallace's Latin Jazz Quintet, Lannie Battistini, Mark Holen's Zambomba, Bobby Matos and his Latin Jazz Ensemble, Mark Levine & The Latin Tinge, Hedí Herrera (the only merengue release we received), Snowboy & The Latin Section, Randy Plaza's Legacia de la Salsa, Charlie Sepúlveda & The Turnaround, Edgard Nevárez & La Trópica, Sonido Ideal, Sexteto Rodríguez, Tres Con Kaché, P.R. Latin Express, Tiempo Libre, Eddie Aponte, Marlon Rosado & La Riqueña, Dislocados, Orquesta Magia Caribeña, Roberto Navarro, Sonora Matancera, Kongas Orquesta, La Tremenda, and Cromalatina.

Drummer **Robby Ameen** is a true giant that shines on the CD *Days In the Life*, where we witnessed his compositional prowess and the outstanding support of bandmates Lincoln Goines, John Beasley, Wayne Krantz, Richie Flores, Conrad Herwig and Brian Lynch.

Another Latin jazz recording that is supported by a wonderful concept is **Henry Brun & The Latin Playerz' *Rhythms and Reeds: A Tribute to the Master, Duke Ellington***. Fourteen 14 Ellington tunes are injected with modern flavors, showcasing saxophone players Justo Almarino, Dr. John Mills (David Byrne, Dr. John, Bonnie Raitt), Vernon "Spot" Barnett (James Brown, Ike & Tina Turner, Ray Charles) and Philippe Vieux (Horace Silver, Cedar Walton, Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri).

Bassist **Fito García** brings a multiple bass concept to his CD *Mi Bajo Rumbero*, as this "Afro-Cuban Bass Project" encompasses four to seven basses on both the melodies and harmonies.

The west coast-based, Guatemalan vocalist **Marlin Ramazzini** (who studied under Grammy winner Omara Portuondo) released a new CD, *Quiero Ser Yo*, backed by a quartet that includes Pancho Amat & César López.

From the Maryland area comes **Sin Miedo**, a band led by pianist/vocalist Didier Prossaird. In 2000, they released *En Clave* and now are back with *Estoy Enamorado*. This new CD – with two songs arranged by José Madera – mixes some hardcore salsa with commercial tracks.

For many years, **Orquesta La Palabra** has recorded music with a soulful twist that has become La Palabra's calling card and has taken said bandleader's music to television and the movies in recent times. His latest production, titled *Musicholic*, continues a journey that he describes as his "most passionate to date".

Havana NRG is back with its long awaited CD, *Receta Perfecta*, containing some sure-shot timba and salsa hits crafted by these seasoned veterans. What will certainly make this CD a favorite of NRG fans is the stylistic range of music that includes bachata, pilón, and even a savory merengue.



DESDE BORINQUEN

Por Elmer González



LALO RODRÍGUEZ EN CONCIERTO. El cantante salsero Lalo Rodríguez presentó el sábado el 7 de noviembre el concierto "35 X 35: Su música, su historia" en el que celebró tres décadas y media de trabajo profesional. Fue una velada maratónica ante un auditorio entusiasta que le acompañó en el Anfiteatro Tito Puente en Hato Rey.

Más que un concierto musical, pareció ser una fiesta de reencuentros entre el cantante con sus amigos y familiares de muchos años. Con aires de informalidad, sinceridad y entusiasmo, el cantor intercaló comentarios sobre su carrera a través de todo el concierto. Identificó en el público a familiares, amigos de la infancia, compañeros y maestros de escuela. Para la mayoría hubo palabras de elogios, agradecimientos y relató algunas anécdotas. Habló bastante pero aún así logró interpretar veinte de los 28 temas programados.

Varios artistas le acompañaron en la tarima. El primero fue Andy Montañez con quien interpretó el bolero "A mi Manera", en homenaje póstumo a Pellín Rodríguez, y la guaracha "El Swing". También cantó con la compositora Corrine Oviedo autora de "Tú ni te piensas", "Te estoy pidiendo" y otros éxitos del vocalista.

El cantante Paquito Guzmán fue otro de los invitados. Lalo lo presentó como uno de los "más influyentes en su formación musical" temprana. "Invité a Paquito para oírlo cantar", dijo y de inmediato el otrora cantante de Joe Quijano y Tommy Olivencia interpretó un mosaico con los boleros "Yo no te prometí nada", "Tus mejores horas" y "Mi desgracia" con el que se ganó una ovación. Luego, ambos cantantes se unieron junto al guitarrista Oscar Ríos para crear una breve atmósfera de bohemia con la interpretación de un par de boleros incluyendo el emblemático "Silencio".

Con su timbre potente y el sabor que le caracteriza, el cantante Luisito Carrión se lució, junto a Lalo, en un "duelo de soneros" con el tema "Nunca contigo". Otro de los invitados lo fue el rapero Vico C quien se apartó de su estilo con la palabra hablada para cantar y sonar, con buena afinación y clave, la pieza "Nadad de ti".

Ubaldo "Lalo" Rodríguez Santos se escuchó poderoso y afinado con un timbre brillante que en sus mejores tiempos, le ganó el título de "El Canario de Puerto Rico". El público pareció disfrutar tanto sus éxitos en la línea de la llamada "salsa romántica" como los de línea más "dura" que marcaron sus inicios cuando con sólo 16 años formó parte del disco "The Sun of Latin Music" (1974) de Eddie Palmieri. El primer disco latino en ganar un premio Grammy.

Bajo la dirección del pianista Ricky Rodríguez, una orquesta de músicos locales reconocidos lo acompañó en los temas, entre otros: "Jamás olvides", "Devórame otra vez", "Si, te mentí", "De vuelta en la trampa", "Las mujeres", "Se empeñan", "Recuerdo escolar" y "Vengo del monte". Con este último recordó su paso por la orquesta de Tommy Olivencia.

A la una de la madrugada Lalo se despidió con "Máximo Chamorro" para luego regresar a pedido del público y cantar "Francisco Andante", no sin antes identificar en el auditorio a uno de sus amigos de la infancia que le sirvió de inspiración para dicho tema.

El concierto, producido por Jesús Arce, tuvo la participación del Conjunto Chaney de Nicolás Vivas quien abrió la actividad con un puñado de sus éxitos más recordados en la modalidad romántica de la salsa.



DESDE LA BAHÍA

By Jesse "Chuy" Varela

REFLECTIONS & THANKS: 2009 will go down in infamy as the year Latin Beat Magazine ceased to exist as a pulp publication. I recall my enthusiasm when I found the first issue at Tower Records in Berkeley. I quickly became a subscriber, and cherished those initial issues as I read them from cover to cover.

What I have learned from Latin Beat over the years is invaluable. The people that birthed the magazine were a collective of insightful but candid historians who dug deep into the history of Afro-Caribbean music. Max Salazar, Dr. Vernon Boggs, Silvio Alava, Luis Tamargo, Nelson Rodríguez (and later NYC's Vicki Solá), Elmer González and so many others became our teachers and reporters who represented their respective region or chosen genre.



At the helm was a mellow aerospace engineer named Rudy Mangual, who loved to play Latin percussion. Rudy and his artistically blessed wife, Yvette, gave Latin Beat a distinctive look and presence on the mainstream magazine racks, alongside Down Beat and Rolling Stone. It was unique.

I was working as the soundman for John Santos' neophyte Machete Ensemble and wondered why nobody was writing about this great music that John and his band were producing in the SF Bay Area. So I called Rudy and asked if I could submit articles to the magazine. It must have been my lucky day because he said, "sure". The subject of this writer's first article was Orestes Vilató, and it was written in two parts.

From there, it has been a joy ride to be a part of Latin Beat. I have been able to write about my musical heroes and heroines in Latin music. Now we move into the cyber-world, where I hope Latin Beat will flourish and continue to fulfill its mission of telling the stories of Latin music and its makers.

Much love and thanks to Rudy, Yvette and all the folks who have made Latin Beat such a central part of the salsa and Latin jazz international scenes. ¡Viva Latin Beat Magazine!



EIGHTH ANNUAL SF SALSA CONGRESS: The Oakland Marriott Hotel was buzzing with salsa dancers from November 20th to 22th, as the Eighth Annual San Francisco Salsa Congress got underway. With the attendance of salseros from all around the world, the hotel was practically sold out but jumping from morning to night. This year, the SF Bay Area had an impressive lineup of dancers participating in the performances and competitions that demonstrated how salsa dancing has grown here.

The SF Bay Area dance companies and couples in attendance included Afinkao, Alex Lee & Kim Nodora, Con Afinque, Couture Dance Alliance, Enrique & Elly, Grupo Evolution, High Maintenance, Isidro & Ariel, JR & Emily, Kanondonga, Lady Mambo, Los Salseros de Stanford, Luis & Anya, Mambo Romero, Mambo Romero Semi-Pro, Montuno, Pretty Boys & Girls, PB&G Rising Stars, Proyecto Manía, Ricardo & Tianne, Ricasalsa, Ricasensación, RumbaChá Ladies, Salsamania, Seaon MJ Show, Son de Manía, Symbolic Mambo, and The Latin Symbolics.



Props need to be given to organizers Michelle Castro, Ricardo Sánchez (pictured), and Albert Torres, as well as to the many helpful volunteers for running such a polished event. The music was stellar this year and topped by the great Andy Montañez (pictured with Jesse Varela), who headlined the Saturday evening show. Newcomers DG2 received favorable audience feedback for their show on Friday night.



The Congress was closed out by the up-and-coming Bay Area band Montuno Swing.

Truly a memorable event!

¡Hasta la próxima! chuyvarela@aol.com



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